

# The Romantic Secret of Young Mr. Vanderbilt's \$45 Job

## How the Announcement of the Engagement of Cornelius Vanderbilt's Heir to the Sister of a Distinguished Lawyer Revealed Her Very Practical and Successful Love Test

IT is seldom that fashionable society has the opportunity to study so delightful and perfect a romance as that recently revealed through the announcement by Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt of the engagement of Miss Rachel Littleton, of the famous Tennessee family, and sister of the distinguished attorney, Martin Littleton, and Mr. and Mrs. Vanderbilt's only son and heir, Cornelius, Jr. A true love match, infused with an equally true Americanism, it has uncovered at the same time why this scion of great wealth has for nearly a year been working most industriously and successfully at a reporting job which at last reports was paying him \$45 a week. And not only working at it successfully, but living on its proceeds without the aid of an allowance or any financial assistance at all from his wealthy family.

It will be remembered that Scriptural history tells of another Rachel, to whom Jacob served for seven years. Time moves faster these days than then—so young Mr. Vanderbilt's period of probation was cut to twelve months. Otherwise, friends say, the motif is similar—the same old love theme, only shorter.

For now it comes out, Miss Littleton, who comes from a stock of doers who long have held accomplishment higher than wealth and individual effort worth more than inheritance, insisted upon young Cornelius demonstrating his mettle before she would consent to link her life with his.

In the light of this revelation much that has really puzzled fashionable society about Mr. Vanderbilt, Jr.'s, situation is now entirely clear. Why, it was asked, if Cornelius wanted to go into the newspaper business, was it necessary for him to cut loose with such Spartan completeness from the luxuries and influence his family was so well able to provide him. Other young men of his class had started in on a career and had not found this necessary.

But it was known that Vanderbilt, who is but twenty-one years old, had voluntarily loosed himself from his allowance when he had gotten his job! He had elected to live upon his meagre salary! It was true his family had kept a room for him in the great brownstone palace on Fifth avenue, beside the home of Steel King Frick; also that he could drop around any time he was hungry for a square meal. But as all during the Summer and Fall the house was boarded up, his father in Europe, his stately mother and lovely sister, Grace, out of town, this did not seem to be of much real comfort to him. Only two relics of his relinquished greatness did he retain—his little twenty-nine-foot racing sloop and his fast roadster.

Not only that, but upon his own admission he picked out after a preliminary fling at the newspaper game in Seattle, a New York newspaper he believed to be entirely free from any affiliations with his clan, or as he himself said:

"I decided that working for a paper where my family had any influence, financial, social or through family connections, would be a lot like being a buck private in your own father's regiment."

So, as he says, he "looked over the field pretty carefully," found a newspaper where, as far as he could learn, "he had no pull," applied for a job and started in on \$25 a week as a cub reporter. He has since been raised.

All of this seemed mighty strange to his friends. That his mother and father were not exactly pleased with his choice of occupation was known. They had scheduled him for entrance in the Sheffield School at Yale, to prepare himself for a career as an engineer. But even if they weren't pleased, those who knew the democracy of the Cornelius Vanderbilts and their attitude to their children, were sure the parents had not put their son to so rigorous a test of sincerity of purpose.

But Miss Littleton had, in effect, it appears she must have said something like this: "It's a changing world, and there may be a lot more changes coming. I want you to be able to live by what's really in you—not by what your fortune of birth gave you. Go to work, keep at it for a year, and then we'll face life together. But you must stand on your own abilities; be independent of family influence, family wealth. Fight it out just as YOU."

And that's exactly what young Mr. Vanderbilt has done, playing the game with an absolute fairness and honesty to Miss Littleton's ever increasing and adoring pride.

All along the 100 per cent American romance has been a leisurely one. It really began a few years ago when Miss Grace Vanderbilt, the sister of Cornelius, was the schoolmate chum of Miss Littleton at an exclusive private school, and determined to have her as a sister-in-law. When Miss Vanderbilt gave a party, the pretty Southern girl was chief guest, and made to dance and play with Brother Cornelius. Did Mrs. Vanderbilt take her daughter to

a college football game, Cornelius and Rachel were paired off by Grace and left as much to themselves as possible.

So cleverly did she manage her unconscious stars that not even Mrs. Vanderbilt realized the stage managing abilities of her only daughter. Before graduating from the school, Miss Littleton had so endeared herself to the older members that she was considered quite one of the family and last Summer was given a taste of Newport life as a house guest at Beaulieu, the Vanderbilt estate on the cliffs.

On the surface there was nothing to mar the development of a very pretty romance. Newport got used to seeing the two riding about the country in Cornelius's chummy roadster, playing tennis or dancing together; but gossip did take a fresh start when the young heir dropped all his social duties and took the newspaper job.

It was such an amazing thing for a Vanderbilt to do that everyone wondered if the family fortunes had taken a sudden fall! But everyone was barking up the wrong tree. The Vanderbilts millions were as good as ever—it was the son of the house who had changed. It must be confessed that there was reason for surprise, for several of the present generation of Vanderbilt men know much better how to spend money than to earn or save it.

Miss Littleton, on the contrary, comes of a long-headed, long-lived Tennessee family, whose members saw reverses after the Civil War. Also she knew what improvisation had led to among her Southern relatives, and early in her life, friends say, she determined that when she married she would choose a man who could, if necessary, support himself. Cornelius, she knew, would inherit several millions from his parents, for Mrs. Vanderbilt was a daughter of the late Richard T. Wilson, who left each member of his family independently rich. Of course, the late Cornelius Vanderbilt cut his eldest son off with a bare three millions, but the brothers and sisters added enough to make his fortune about six millions. This money, under General Vanderbilt's management has greatly increased and naturally a large share of it would eventually go to the son.

Under these circumstances it seemed most unlikely that he would ever have to earn his own living, but Miss Littleton wanted to be sure that he could if he had to; and, too, earning one's own living is mighty good discipline even for the only son of a millionaire in these uncertain days—explaining again the very unusual things young Mr. Vanderbilt did after the war ended.

For, of course, Cornelius went to war. Miss Littleton had nothing to do, actively, with this. She could not have kept him out even if she had tried, for the very day after a state of war was announced, Vanderbilt enlisted and very soon was off to the training camp of Spartansburg with the Twenty-seventh Division. He was then only nineteen years old and would not have been drafted; but go to war he would, and did.

At that time there was no engagement between the two, and it is doubtful if there was even an understanding because of their extreme youth. Miss Littleton being barely seventeen. They were just awfully good friends and companions—with Vanderbilt hovering over them with zealous care.

Vanderbilt went overseas with his division, but later, owing to illness, was sent back to America and was finally assigned to a post on the Pacific Coast. While resting up at his home in New York preparatory to going West, Cornelius again became the charming Southern girl's companion when she went to her daily duty at

the canteen, or took her part in the various drives and other war work.

But when "Neil's" orders to go West arrived, it is now conceded, an "understanding" did exist between him the patriotic war-worker.

Grace was all smiles and happiness, and so were the two most concerned. Letters flew fast and thick between Fifth avenue and the far-away army post, and it must be confessed that Mrs. Vanderbilt began to show signs of knowledge. Her only objection, however, was due to her son's youth, which was accentuated by the delicacy of his health. Miss Grace was a tower of strength just here, for she carefully explained to her mother that they need not be married right away, and youth

was something that could be outgrown, given the necessary time.

And all this time, it now develops, Miss Littleton had those very definite ideas of her own as to what her future husband should be and do.

Imagine the surprise felt then, not only by the Vanderbilt family, but by all their fashionable friends, when word came East that Cornelius was behaving in a most un-Vanderbilt manner! Immediately after the

armistice was signed, he, on the eve of getting a commission, got himself demobilized and a real job almost in the same breath!

Without a word to any one, the soldier heir to a large fortune had walked into a newspaper office out West and demanded work. He got it, too, as a cub reporter; also he had a snapshot of himself taken as a working man and sent it back to Miss Littleton. His salary there was \$15 per week.

Then he came back East and took that second newspaper position at a \$10 increase.

There was a quiet little jollification party, in which Miss Littleton and sister Grace took important parts, the latter as chaperon, of course. The future glowed with a rosy light. The secret would be kept, and the engagement announced at the end of this most important year. But there the plans went astray. Some one tipped off a rival daily and immediately a news sensation promised. Camouflaging their identity they called him up at his apartment and asked casually:

"Say Vanderbilt, how about the news of your engagement?"

Mr. Vanderbilt was mildly surprised, for it seems that his city editor some time previously had hinted at this engagement, and he had promised to let his own paper have the scoop at the proper moment. So, thinking it was his own paper calling, he answered: "Why, I'm not ready to have it announced yet, but we will have the first crack at it later."

The telephone clicked and Cornelius thought no more about the call. The next morning the rival paper came out with the announcement, and the fat was in the fire for sure. Too late our hero realized that it was not his own city editor who had called him.

Mrs. Vanderbilt was at Hot Springs when the announcement was published. Packing her trunks she returned post haste to New York, for she had made a cast-iron agreement with her son that no public announcement would be made without her special sanction. It was this return that led to rumors that she disapproved of the affair.

As a matter of fact Mrs. Vanderbilt and Cornelius are immensely pleased with the match. They recognize that their son's bride-to-be is as thoughtful and capable as she is charming, a girl of ideals and force of character, sister to one of the most distinguished and honored members of the American bar and just the kind to make their son happy.

It was rather embarrassing for a time for both hero and heroine. Again Sister Grace stepped into the breach. But a new complication arose. If no official announcement was made, society would go on gossiping and the romance would necessarily be disturbed in the eyes of the lovers. If the Vanderbilts did make the acknowledgment, then Miss Littleton would have to let up in her requirement as to a year's job for her lover before her final consent.

Common sense finally won the day. The Littletons and Vanderbilts made the public announcement and the bride-to-be gave up her cherished plan, asserting that, anyway, "Neil" had proved his ability to hold a job and, of course, he would hold it until they were married and after the honeymoon, too.

It is worth while noting that Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., is the only man in his family who has gone out and worked for strangers for money. Vanderbilt men have held and do hold jobs, but they are family affairs, and always in one of the corporations controlled by the family wealth.



Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt.



His Newspaper Assignments. Above Is Seen the Ancestral Vanderbilt Mansion at Newport.



Miss Rachel Littleton, the Little, High-Idealed Southern Girl, Who Made Young Vanderbilt Prove His Ability to Get and Keep a Job Before She Would Promise to Marry Him.

Sister Grace Vanderbilt During Her Schoolgirl Days, When She Made Up Her Mind to Have Miss Littleton As a Sister-in-Law.